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BY JAMES S. KAPLAN

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There is something about a covered bridge that makes one feel instantly nostalgic. Not only are they quaint relics that hearken back to America’s horse-and-buggy days, but the covered bridges that survive also exemplify the ingenuity of early Americans. These bridges first appeared in the United States around 1805 connecting the small communities that sprang up along waterways in the forested interior of the Northeast. By 1870, more than 10,000 covered bridges spanned the country. Today only about 750 have survived. Many have become victims of arson and vandalism, as well as age, weather and urban sprawl. Our Visions of America feature spotlights a few bridges that preservation-minded communities have been able to sustain.

From the earliest boneshaker to today’s sleekest road bike, the bicycle has long been a symbol of freedom. Well before Americans became enamored with the automobile, the two-wheeled mechanical horse represented independence for people who had always relied on horses, train schedules or their own two feet to get them from one place to another. Our feature explores the revolutionary history of these freedom machines.

Freedom was an elusive dream for the estimated 32,000 Americans imprisoned by the British during the American Revolution in just New York City alone. Held in converted buildings or on ships, as many as 18,000 died in these prisons—more than died on the battlefield. Our feature describes the horrific conditions, rampant disease, scarce food and blatant neglect faced by these prisoners, and it details a few items owned by Revolutionary-era POWs now on display in the DAR Americana Room.

Every Fourth of July for more than a decade, historian James Kaplan has led a walking tour of Revolutionary War sites in Lower Manhattan. His tour focuses on General Horatio Gates, the victorious leader of the Battle of Saratoga, as well as a player in the contentious elections of 1800. Kaplan’s story takes another look at this largely unknown Revolutionary hero.

We travel West to learn more about the frontier history of the pristinely beautiful Jackson Hole, Wyo., which offers adventure for modern-day explorers, and we head down to Santa Fe, N.M., to celebrate the city’s 400th birthday. Our Tour Takes focus on General Horatio Gates, the victorious leader of the Battle that preservation-minded communities have been able to sustain.

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The American dream can still become the American reality. That’s why it’s important for me to pass on to my students the ideals that make this nation what it was conceived to be.”

—Tim Bailey

Get Out of Your Seat

Tim Bailey’s interactive lessons engage students in founding principles

By JAMIE ROBERTS
Photography by RAVELL CALL

The rights and responsibilities of being an American citizen are foundational principles for Tim Bailey, 2009 Gilder Lehrman History Teacher of the Year, and he sees it as a privilege to pass on those principles of freedom to his students. At Escalante Elementary School in Salt Lake City, he teaches a student body that is 70 percent poverty-level and 86 percent minority. This population, hailing from 30 different countries and speaking a score of different native languages, shapes how he crafts his lessons.

“Since I have a lot of second-language learners, I try to create for these students the sense of the American culture and build an understanding of what it means to be a citizen of the United States,” he says.

Bailey has written several cooperative social studies lessons that teach history interactively. He gives students roles to play, from patriots during the American Revolution to pioneers on a wagon train heading to Oregon, and presents them with choices that determine their characters’ futures.

“It’s a little bit like those ‘choose your own adventure,’ books,” Bailey says, “Each character has his own strengths and weaknesses, and the groups have to decide together what to do if, say, their wagon breaks down. Every day they have to journal the experience.

“The connections kids make stick with them years later.”

His interactive lessons are part of the “Easy Simulations” series by Scholastic, and they encompass different eras of history, including the time of the early explorers, pioneer days and the Civil War. He has edited lessons on the American Revolution and is writing a volume about American immigration.

Bailey believes getting students out of their seats to role-play helps them create an emotional connection with the people who shaped American history. “Walking in the shoes of explorers, soldiers and lawmakers creates an understanding of the principles on which this nation was founded that I have never achieved with a textbook.

“Students are hungry for this kind of learning; they soak it up like a sponge,” he says. “It’s funny—the hardest thing is calming them down after one of these cooperative group lessons. They get so excited, so engaged.”

Bailey’s interactive lessons are not only fun ways to learn the history of the nation, but they also incorporate reading, writing, math and science into the stories that students reenact. This integration is essential, especially with the limited time and long list of mandates many teachers face.

“History is not something that should be optional. It’s as important as language arts or math, but there is not enough time to teach everything we have to teach to any degree of mastery unless you can incorporate and integrate all the core subjects into history,” Bailey says.

Bailey was the first member of his family to graduate from college or even high school, so he credits his success as a teacher to the hard work and determination born of the American dream.

“The American dream can still become the American reality,” he says. “That’s why it’s important for me to pass on to my students the ideals that make this nation what it was conceived to be—a nation where all can be assured of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. A lot of people still come to this country looking for that.”

Peek inside America’s classrooms to discover ingenious ways of teaching history.

ClassAct

Get Out of Your Seat
Letters
Spirited comments from our readers

Another Real Daughter Remembered

I spent the morning of January 9, 2010, going through boxes of very old chapter documents. I took a break to read the newest copy of American Spirit and enjoyed the article on Real Daughter Eunice Davis. Then I went back to work.

Within 10 minutes, I’d come across an 1899 photograph labeled “Mary Robbins, Patriot Daughter.” Delving further, I found a note from her to our first Chapter Regent giving some family history. I found a note from the first Regent to a later Regent “enclosing a note with autograph from Real Daughter Mary Robbins.” I discovered a typed letter from the Curator General advising that a gold souvenir spoon was being sent under separate cover to be presented by the chapter to Mary Robbins. Finally, I came upon a letter written by the Chapter Historian to her U.S. congressman requesting a pension for Miss Robbins.

Everything made sense to me because I had just read your article! Even my mother, former C.A.R. member and twice a Chapter Regent, had no idea our chapter had a Real Daughter.

Thank you for such a timely article that was so immediately useful!

Rev. Dr. Marcia C. Eveland, Historian
Katherine Gaylord Chapter, Bristol, Conn.

Asheville on Her Mind

I just received my January/February issue, and I wanted to thank Megan Pacella for the wonderful story she wrote about Asheville and Doug Allen for some great photos. We are very proud of our town, and it was nice to see it being featured in our DAR magazine. Here in Asheville we have two DAR chapters—the Ruth Davidson Chapter and Edward Buncombe Chapter, the town’s first. In 2003, the Edward Buncombe Chapter celebrated its 100th year.

C. Denise Peters, Registrar
Edward Buncombe Chapter, Asheville, N.C.

A Teaching Tool

I must tell you how much I enjoy reading American Spirit. I’m a college professor with very little time for pleasure reading. But the articles in the January/February issue were excellent: well-researched, well-written and on a diversity of topics that all caught my attention. I read every single one and learned a lot!

A few past issues have spurred me to share the magazine with colleagues at the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry—especially the one on John Muir and on the establishment of the national parks (July/August 2008). The article on the nascent United States’ thorny relations with Great Britain and France during their war even spurred me to include some of the information from it in my teaching of European and early American art.

Thanks for a great magazine. I look forward to many more enjoyable issues.

Sara L. French
Comfort Tyler Chapter, Syracuse, N.Y.

More About Herkimer’s Legacy

I was most pleased to read the January/February article “Our Patriots: General Nicholas Herkimer.” I would like to take this opportunity, however, to correct a couple of statements.

The opening paragraph states that the “Oriskany Chapter ... erected a series of 14 stone markers ... at the site of the Battle of Oriskany.” The markers were, in fact, the brainchild of Col. Marinus Willett Chapter and are actually spaced along the route taken by General Herkimer and the Tryon County Militia as they marched to relieve Fort Stanwix. The first marker is at the general’s home in Little Falls, N.Y. The last marker is the one described in the article as near the site of the general’s beech tree “command post.”

My mother, Mary Helen Jones, a member of Col. Marinus Willett-Mohawk Valley Chapter, was restoration project manager for the restoration and rededication of Marker No. 10 on what is now Whitesboro Street in Utica. The restoration project, completed in August 2008, was sponsored by Oneida Chapter with financial support from the Oneida American Indian Nation.

In the second paragraph in the “Herkimer’s Legacy” section, it says that “Fort Stanwix still stands in Rome, N.Y.” It would be more accurate to say a reconstructed Fort Stanwix stands there. The Fort Stanwix of the American Revolution was abandoned in 1781, and the city of Rome was eventually built over the site. In 1965, as part of an urban renewal plan, the city purchased and cleared the block traditionally held to be the site of the fort and donated the site to the National Park Service (NPS). Between 1970 and 1974, the NPS conducted extensive archeological explorations of the site and collected artifacts now displayed in the fort’s museum. Reconstruction
of the fort began in 1974, and the Fort Stanwix National Monument was opened to visitors on March 12, 1976.

Emilie J. Siarkiewicz, National Vice Chairman
Units Overseas Committee, El Presidio Chapter, Tucson, Ariz.

Of Palatines and Patriots

I read the article on Patriot Nicholas Herkimer in the January/February issue and was glad to find it there. However, I feel that there should be a little clarification and more information about the Battle of Oriskany.

The 14 stone markers that were placed and dedicated on June 14, 1912, were placed by various historic groups including DAR chapters (Astenrogen, Caughnawaga, Colonel William Feeter, Henderson, General Nicholas Herkimer, Col. Marinus Willet, Mohawk Valley, Oneida, Oriskany), S.A.R., schoolchildren of Utica and the Utica Chamber of Commerce. These markers cover the 40-mile route that General Herkimer and his 800-man militia took to relieve the siege at Fort Stanwix.

During the Battle of Oriskany, the wounded Gen. Herkimer had his men form a circle with “two men behind every tree,” one to fire while the other reloaded. This circle was never broken, even though they were greatly outnumbered. The American Indian allies of the British left the battlefield as their losses were great, and then the British left. There was hardly a patriot family in the Mohawk Valley that did not lose a family member or who wasn’t seriously injured in that horrific battle.

The Herkimer family originally came to the New World in 1710 as part of the Palatine immigration. Gen. Herkimer had 11 brothers and sisters. My sister, Sarah Timmerman Israel, and I are descendants of two of his sisters. I now work as a docent/site interpreter of Gen. Nicholas Herkimer State Historic Site, and Sarah is president of the New York State Chapter of Palatines to America, a German genealogy society.

This year will be the 300th anniversary of our Palatine ancestors coming to America. Palatines to America will be holding a national conference in the historic Hudson Valley at Fishkill, N.Y., June 17–19. For more information, visit www.palam.org.

Nancy Timmerman Cioch
Astenrogen Chapter, Little Falls, N.Y.

Finding Elusive Ancestors

In the January/February issue I was delighted to read the article “Remember the Ladies.” There was so much useful information with lots of good tips for locating female ancestors. I especially liked the additional resources for finding these elusive women. I hope that there will be more genealogy articles in the future.

Diantha Kohler, Regent
Saint Helena Plantation Chapter, Palm Harbor, Fla.

A Convincing Issue

My stepdaughter showed the January/February Today’s Daughters article to a friend and neighbor. She read the article on me, plus every article in the magazine. She then wrote her daughter to send their genealogy—she has always known she could be a DAR member. She plans to become one at age 95! The magazine convinced her.

Virginia Hassenflu
Maria Jefferson Chapter, St. Augustine, Fla.

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American Spirit • May/June 2010
This year Santa Fe, N.M., celebrates its 400th birthday. Spanish settlers arrived in the region in 1599, with settlement of the Santa Fe area starting as early as 1607. In 1610, the Spanish Crown officially recognized Santa Fe as the northern capital of the territory known as New Spain, which extended all the way to Mexico City. The city’s official name was La Villa Real de la Santa Fé de San Francisco de Asís—The Royal City of the Holy Faith of Saint Francis of Assisi.

But Santa Fe had been a thriving community long before the Spanish arrived. The Pueblo American Indians had established permanent communities in the Tesuque and Santa Fe river valleys between 850 and 1000 A.D.

Relations between the American Indians and the newcomers were strained at best, with the colonial-minded Spanish oppressing the tribe and undermining their culture through government action and intermarriage.

The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 drove the Spanish out of Santa Fe. After 12 years of exile near what is today El Paso, Texas, the colonials returned in force to wrest Santa Fe back. A negotiated return of the Spanish in 1693 fell apart on December 29 when a bitter battle erupted. The Spanish ultimately prevailed.

Over the next century, cultures and peoples continued to blend in Santa Fe. The region became a haven for Jewish immigrants expelled from Spain for refusing to convert to Catholicism. These new arrivals hid their religious beliefs and successfully assimilated into the strongly Catholic society. Recent research into this phenomenon has revealed Jewish heritage among many long-established northern New Mexico families of Spanish descent.

The year 1821 brought two major changes to Santa Fe. Having gained independence from Spain, Mexico assumed control of the region of New Spain. The Santa Fe Trail opened that year as well, giving the region the chance to trade with the swiftly expanding United States. The local economy boomed as manufactured goods filtered into the region.

On June 2, 1924, Congress enacted the Indian Citizenship Act, which granted citizenship to all American Indians born in the United States. The right to vote, however, was governed by state law; not all states allowed American Indians to vote until 1957.
The outbreak of war between Mexico and the Republic of Texas led to an unsuccessful attempt by Texans to capture Santa Fe in 1841. After the United States declared war on Mexico in 1846, General Stephen W. Kearny led an army against Santa Fe. Governor Manuel Armijo elected not to oppose Kearny, and the area became an American territory.

Settlers from the East soon appeared on the Santa Fe Trail, headed for New Mexico and points west. The arrival of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway in 1880 hastened the influx of goods, people and new cultures. New Mexico became the 47th state on January 6, 1912.

Despite modern influences, Santa Fe retains much of its Old World charm. A city of about 70,000, it offers delights for the mind, the palate and the body. Much of its rich history has been preserved, including the Palace of the Governors. Constructed of adobe in the early 17th century, it served as Spain’s seat of government for the entire Southwest region.

In the early 1920s, Santa Fe began developing into a world-famous art colony, whose leading lights included Georgia O’Keefe. Today it is one of the largest art markets in the country, and it attracts collectors and curators from around the world to its galleries, exhibitions and art fairs.

The descendants of the Pueblo tribe remain a strong influence on art, architecture and culture. The area is home to 10 of the state’s 19 pueblos, each of which has its own language, pottery styles, ritual dances and crafts.

The mountains and canyons around the city offer endless, year-round adventure for outdoor enthusiasts. Activities include hiking, biking, snow skiing, horseback riding, camping and river rafting.

For more information about visiting Santa Fe, visit the Convention and Visitors Bureau’s Web site at http://santafe.org. For more about its history and the 400th birthday celebration, visit www.santafe400th.com.

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WhatNot

MEMORIAL DAY SALUTE

Remembering the Brave

HBO's Gripping Series ‘The Pacific’ Now on DVD

HBO'S 10-PART MINISERIES “The Pacific” follows the Marine Corps' campaigns against Japan in World War II. It tracks the intertwined real-life experiences of three U.S. Marines—Robert Leckie, Eugene Sledge and John Basilone—across the vast Pacific Theater.

The series, which airs its final episode May 16, begins with the attack on Pearl Harbor and follows the Marines from their first battle at Guadalcanal, to Cape Gloucester and Peleliu, across the bloody sands of Iwo Jima, through the horror of Okinawa, and finally to their triumphant but uneasy return home after V-J Day.

The miniseries is based on Helmet for My Pillow by Robert Leckie; With the Old Breed and China Marine by Eugene B. Sledge; Red Blood, Black Sand by Chuck Tatum; and original interviews conducted by the filmmakers. Executive producers are Tom Hanks, Steven Spielberg and Gary Goetzman, the team behind the acclaimed HBO miniseries “Band of Brothers.” To purchase the series, visit http://store.hbo.com.

USPS Honors Navy Heroes

FOUR AMERICAN NAVY HEROES of World Wars I and II were recently immortalized on stamps:

William S. Sims (1858–1936): Commander of U.S. naval forces in European waters during World War I, Sims was an outspoken reformer and innovator who helped shape the Navy into a modern fighting force, and author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book Victory at Sea.

Arleigh A. Burke (1901–1996): Commander of a top destroyer squadron in WWII and three-term Chief of Naval Operations, Burke sped up the construction of nuclear-powered submarines and initiated the Polaris Ballistic Missile Program. Burke helped to modernize the Navy and played a major role in the Cold War. In 1977, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

John McCloy (1876–1945): Described by a shipmate as “a bull,” McCloy has the distinction of being one of the few men in the nation’s history to earn two Medals of Honor for separate acts of heroism—first during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 and again in 1914 when American forces landed at Veracruz, Mexico.

Doris Miller (1919–1943): The first black American hero of World War II, Miller became an inspiration to generations of Americans due to his actions at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, aboard the battleship West Virginia. Unable to reach his regular battle station, Miller helped rescue his shipmates. After moving the ship’s mortally wounded captain from the bridge, he then took over an unattended .50-caliber machine gun. Though never trained in its operation, he maintained fire on Japanese aircraft until ordered to abandon the bridge as fires raged out of control. On May 27, 1942, Miller was awarded the Navy Cross.

All of these men have had ships named after them. They are continual reminders of the sacrifice and courage of the Navy and all of our armed forces.
Women Pilots From WWII Honored By Congress

WOMEN AIRFORCE SERVICE PILOTS (WASP) from World War II were honored March 10, 2010, when they and representatives of deceased members received Congressional Gold Medals during a ceremony in the United States Capitol. The WASP were a trailblazing group of 1,102 civilian female pilots, the first to fly military aircraft under the direction of the U.S. Army Air Forces during WWII. Nearly 70 years ago, they ferried fighter, bomber, transport and training aircraft and performed other missions in the continental United States to help defend America’s freedom.

The recognition was a long time in coming: WASP were not granted military status until 1977. The women pilots had to pay their own way to training, set up collections to help send a fallen member home, and after the war, pay their own way home. Fewer than 300 of these brave women survive today, and more than half traveled to Washington to personally receive their medals.

The Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation hosted the event. “The Women’s Memorial was built so that the American public, and the world, could come to know about the more than 2.5 million women who have served in the nation’s defense,” said Brigadier General Wilma L. Vaught (USAF, Ret.), president of the foundation.

For more information on the memorial, visit www.womensmemorial.org.

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Commemorating the 300th Anniversary Of the Palatines Crossing

THIS YEAR MARKS 300 YEARS since the early Palatines—the term for an immigrant from the Palatinate, or Pfalz, region of Germany—landed on the shores of America. Palatines played significant roles in the Revolutionary War and in the founding of the new nation, and they helped pave the way for later immigrant groups.

Displaced from their homes along Germany’s Rhine River and scattered in small communities throughout Holland and England, the first group of Palatines was sent to America in 1710 to work as indentured servants, gathering tar and masts for British naval ships in camps along the Hudson River Valley. But when the British discovered that the tar produced in New York wasn’t the kind they needed, the workers were abandoned. Gathering their meager belongings, the Palatines set out for New York’s Schoharie Valley, where American Indians taught them how to clear land and plant crops and they built a thriving community. But after Dutch land speculators bought land in Schoharie and tried to collect rents from the group, the Palatines dispersed once more, with some settling in Pennsylvania and others traveling to the Mohawk Valley, where they agreed to fight French fur traders in exchange for land.

Along the Mohawk River, the Palatines built trading posts, mills, churches and taverns. As English laws began to cause unrest and dissatisfaction, they formed a committee to complain about their treatment as citizens of the British Crown. On May 21, 1775, the Palatine District Committee of Safety met at the house of Philip W. Fox and wrote a declaration of independence—more than a year before the Declaration of Independence was written in Philadelphia. They were among the first to form militias and take up arms against the British and their American Indian allies to defend their homes and freedom. Many lost lives while fighting in battles along the frontier border, or were kidnapped and taken to Canada as prisoners.

After the Revolutionary War, their involvement in state and local government helped establish the new republic. When the War of 1812 broke out, a militia full of Palatine descendants was quick to march west to stop British aggression.

The genealogical organization Palatines to America is marking the 300th anniversary with a conference June 17–19, 2010, in Fishkill, N.Y. The event will include historical presentations and a tour of the sites where early Palatines settled along the Hudson River. For more information, visit www.palam.org.

Dramatic Voices

From the committee of Founding Fathers who wrote the Declaration of Independence to Susan B. Anthony’s testimony in her suffrage trial, the power of protest through spoken and written word has shaped our country from its inception.

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Thanks to the Save America’s Treasures Fund, the Cherokee National Capitol in Tahlequah, Okla., will still be standing for generations to come. A $150,000 award from the National Park Service will be used to restore the building’s roof and foundation, which have been damaged by water infiltration. The Cherokee national preservation project is scheduled to begin this year.

“The Cherokee National Capitol is a source of great pride for the Cherokee people with its rich history, symbolism and continued functionality within today’s tribal government,” says Chad Smith, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. “Moving onward with the restoration, we look forward to sharing and educating the public on the historical significance of this building.”

Since the Cherokee Nation reunified its government in Indian Territory in 1839, the grounds on which the capitol was built have been witness to much history. In 1843, the site played host to one of the most significant tribal gatherings in American history when more than 17 tribes from across the United States came to Tahlequah for the International Indian Council.

Built in 1870, the Cherokee National Capitol was completed shortly after the Civil War, a period during which the Cherokee Nation overcame turmoil and intertribal dissension to band together and build its government seat. Over the years, the building has survived fire and other challenges. Today, the national landmark stands as a reminder of the progressive government and social system the Cherokee Nation established once it arrived in Indian Territory.

The Cherokee National Capitol is one of 41 projects funded by the NPS’ Save America’s Treasures Fund. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/history/hps/treasures.
Deborah Avery Chapter, Lincoln, Neb., was the first DAR chapter organized in Nebraska. The honor of naming the chapter was given to Frances Avery Haggard, the member with the greatest number of ancestors who served in the Revolutionary War. Mrs. Haggard chose her great-great-grandmother, Deborah Avery, the daughter of Lieutenant Colonel Ebenezer Avery of the Eighth Connecticut Militia, as the chapter’s namesake. In November 1763, Deborah married a cousin, Ensign Daniel Avery. On September 6, 1781, her husband, brother, brother-in-law and several cousins were killed in the massacre at Fort Griswold in New London, Conn. Three additional cousins were wounded, and three more were captured and taken to New York.

Mrs. Haggard presented the chapter with a silver-mounted gavel made of oak from a rafter in the house where Daniel and Deborah Avery first lived. The gavel is now housed at the Nebraska State Historical Society.

Daring Dicey Chapter, Vernon, Ala., in choosing Laodicea Langston Springfield as its namesake, honored a woman whose exploits earned her the nickname “Daring Dicey.” Legend has it that Dicey, a teenager at the time of the hard-fought Revolutionary battles in upcountry South Carolina, learned that Bloody Bill Cunningham and his loyalist guerillas were planning a surprise attack on a patriot settlement where her brother lived. Leaving her home in the middle of the night, Dicey crossed streams and marshes on foot and swam a treacherous, icy river to get word to her brother in time to avert a massacre. On another occasion, she allegedly threw herself between her father, Solomon Langston, and a loyalist threatening to shoot him.

Dicey married Thomas Springfield in 1783 and is reputed to have borne at least 22 children. Dicey and Thomas are buried at Travelers Rest, S.C.

The Nathanael Greene Chapter, Greenville, S.C., erected a marker at the site of her childhood home.

Does your chapter name have an unusual story behind it? E-mail a description to americanspirit@dar.org.

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“IS YOUR JOB JUST LIKE ON TV?” Ever since the popular “CSI” TV series started, that’s a question Pamela Macke Johnson has heard a lot. Yes, she’s a forensic chemist (her title is criminalist supervisor of the Missouri State Highway Patrol’s Troop E Lab in Cape Girardeau, Mo.), but no, her job is nothing like the TV show. “I wish we got results back that fast!” Mrs. Johnson says. “It actually takes a week to two weeks to process fingerprints from start to a finished report—not quite like on TV.”

Mrs. Johnson doesn’t actually visit the crime scenes. Instead, the evidence comes to a state-of-the-art lab where her staff of 10 analyzes latent prints, DNA, toxicology data, drug chemistry and firearms operability on an average of 3,400 cases per year for a 20-county region of southeastern Missouri.

Mrs. Johnson found her calling as a student at Southeast Missouri State University, where she majored in chemistry and took a position as a student laboratory and research analyst at the school’s regional crime lab. “I was instantly hooked,” she says.

So hooked, in fact, that Mrs. Johnson ended up back at the lab a decade later, and became director in 2003. The lab merged with the Missouri Highway Patrol in 2006.

A typical week for her includes processing casework, managing staff and teaching budding CSIs at her alma mater. She also examines 10 to 15 sets of latent prints each month and fields questions from local law enforcement agencies, attorneys and the media.

Many of the cases are routine, but occasionally the lab will help crack a case. Recently, through the cooperative efforts of police departments in two states, her lab helped link a suspected serial killer to five unsolved homicides from the 1980s.

“Illinois came up with a DNA link to an individual, and through further investigation, our lab was able to identify a matching palm print from one of the scenes, as well as DNA,” Mrs. Johnson says. “The individual pled guilty and confessed to the rest of the homicides. The stories that come with the cases and the advances in science keep the field fresh and challenging.”

About half of the cases that come through her lab pertain to illegal drugs, including methamphetamine labs. Long before meth labs took root in Missouri, Mrs. Johnson was an expert in the field because of her membership in Clandestine Laboratory Investigating Chemists. At a meeting in 1995, Mrs. Johnson attended a seminar that discussed trends in drug making—among them, a new kind of meth lab that used household products to create the deadly drug. After the meeting, Mrs. Johnson shared what she learned with local law enforcement and trained them to identify and safely collect the evidence in these labs. “Like in many rural areas, meth use became an epidemic here, but I believe it could have been a lot worse had we not been so proactive,” she says.

With Mrs. Johnson’s help, local law enforcement also trained the public to help identify meth labs. “They found meth labs in hotel rooms and in rented apartments, and the waste from one lab poured out on a roadside near a farm, so it really became a public safety awareness issue,” she says. “We didn’t want innocent people getting hurt.”

Mrs. Johnson has also spoken at the Missouri State Conference on the use of DNA testing in genealogy. “DNA testing has been developed so that it can actually be a good tool for genealogy, if applied appropriately,” she says.

An avid genealogist, Mrs. Johnson joined the John Guild Chapter, Jackson, Mo., in 1987. She was the first woman in her family to join, but she has since recruited her mother, sister and daughter to the organization. She is currently South Central National Division Vice Chairman of the DAR Speakers Staff Committee.

Mrs. Johnson enjoys spending free time with her family, whose members have lived in southeast Missouri for several generations. “I lucked out,” she says. “My Patriot ancestor moved from Georgia in 1806 to Cape County, Mo., and we’ve been here ever since.”
In a valley wreathed by the Teton Mountains to the west and the Gros Ventre Mountains to the east lies Jackson Hole, Wyo. But this is hardly low country: The valley floor measures more than 6,000 feet above sea level, and Grand Teton, the highest peak in its range, reaches 13,770 feet skyward.  

BY COURTNEY PETER
_CREATED millions of years ago by powerful fault-line activity and dotted by glacial lakes at their bases, the Teton Mountains form the undeniable focal point of the landscape. But the region also encompasses a diverse range of environments, including lush meadows, marshes, forests, sagebrush flats, rocky foothills, glacial canyons, high-alpine tundra and the waterways of the Snake and Gros Ventre rivers. It is a place where relentless wilderness persists despite the passage of time.

**Prehistoric Presence**

Prehistoric nomadic people began using the valley approximately 11,000 years ago during the last ice age, according to the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum. Later, American Indian tribes, such as the Shoshone, Blackfeet and Gros Ventres, visited the valley to hunt and hold ceremonies, and may have even lived there at times. But, writes Robert B. Betts in *Along the Ramparts of the Tetons: The Saga of Jackson Hole, Wyoming* (University Press of Colorado, 1978), “the major mountain tribes never visited Jackson Hole in anywhere near the numbers or with the frequency that has been assumed.” Jackson Hole remained largely vacant for decades before the arrival of early 19th-century explorers.

**Traipsing and Trapping**

Lewis and Clark did not pass through Jackson Hole, but their reports enticed adventurers to further explore the West. Legend holds that John Colter, an alumnus of the famed expedition, became the first white man to arrive at Jackson Hole and the Yellowstone region in 1807–1808. Regrettably, Colter left no written records, so whether he reached the area is the subject of much debate.

Next in line was a small group of men from Henry’s Fort, Idaho, who passed through in 1811, followed closely by a party sent by John Jacob Astor to establish a string of trading posts reaching the Pacific Ocean in an effort to control the fur trade.

In 1822, Congress lifted restrictions on private fur trappers’ trade with American Indians. “Suddenly, the enormous empire west of the Mississippi was thrown wide open to private enterprise, and the race for the beaver-rich streams of the northern Rocky Mountains promptly got under way,” Betts writes. For the next decade or so, the paths of trappers and mountain men, such as Jim Bridger, Kit Carson and David Jackson, laced the valley. The Rocky Mountain Fur Company established itself as the elite operation in the area, and Astor’s American Fur Company also vied for valuable pelts.

Originally called Jackson’s Hole, the valley takes its name both from David Jackson, who was said to favor the trapping waters there, and the trappers’ term for a valley ringed by mountains.

**Establishing Roots**

By 1840, the fur trade had all but ended, and Jackson Hole lay largely unvisited. Several prospectors seeking gold panned the local waters hoping to discover the precious metal but, finding nothing, soon moved on.

The Homestead Act of 1862 allowed a head of household to claim 160 acres of government land as long as he built a house and cultivated the land for five years. It
proved a difficult prospect. In his *Diary of a Dude Wrangler* (Scribner, 1938), Struthers Burt defined homesteading as “the government betting you 160 acres against starvation, and the government always winning.”

Simply navigating through Teton Pass to reach Jackson Hole involved an arduous climb, followed by a descent so steep that many homesteaders resorted to tying whole trees to the backs of their wagons to slow them. Even if they arrived safely, isolation, a short growing season and the inherent fragility of relying on a small plot of land to provide life’s essentials all posed challenges.

Nonetheless, hardy settlers managed to establish modest homesteads consisting of a small cabin and, often, a barn. Among the earliest were John Holland and John and Millie Carns, who arrived in the early 1880s. Most of Jackson Hole’s early 1880s homesteaders were bachelors until, late in the decade, a group of Mormons crossed into the valley from Idaho, settling in a lane known as Grovort, or Mormon Row, where others soon joined them.

While settlers struggled to subsist by ranching, they obtained supplemental income by guiding hunting trips for wealthy Eastern and European outdoorsmen. The early 20th century marked the advent of dude ranching, which, Betts wrote, “quickly spread throughout the West, particularly to Jackson Hole, which soon became one of its most flourishing centers.” Tourism remains a vital part of the local economy.

Eventually, several towns grew in the shelter of the valley, including Moose, Moran, Wilson and Jackson, the largest village and the Teton County seat. Progressive for its age, Jackson elected one of the nation’s first town councils composed entirely of women in 1920. The *New York Evening Herald* dubbed it “the petticoat government.”

**Protecting the Landscape**

Jackson Hole offers extraordinary access to its resources, thanks to early conservationists with the foresight to protect its natural wonders. Grand Teton National Park, the National Elk Refuge and Bridger-Teton National Forest are valley neighbors, and Yellowstone National Park sits about 60 miles from Jackson. The area features numerous activities for adventurers, including hiking, camping, bird-watching, fishing, hunting, skiing, rafting and observing wildlife such as bison, elk, moose, bears, wolves, bighorn sheep, bald eagles and more.

Reports and photographs compiled by Dr. Ferdinand Vandiveer Hayden’s 1871 survey party sent to explore Yellowstone spurred a desire to preserve the countryside. Thus, the first national park, covering parts of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, was born in 1872. While the creation of Yellowstone National Park encountered little opposition, the same cannot be said of Grand Teton National Park.

Originally, Grand Teton National Park, created in 1929, included only the Teton Range and the adjacent lakes, to the dissatisfaction of conservationists. In response, John D. Rockefeller Jr. bought thousands of acres of surrounding land, which he planned to donate for an addition to the park. Some vehemently opposed the plan, preferring to limit federal involvement, preserve the tax base and retain private land. The ensuing stalemate finally prompted Rockefeller to voice his frustration to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who in 1943, invoked his presidential power to establish the Jackson Hole National Monument. Finally, in 1950, President Harry S. Truman signed a bill merging the original park and the monument into the present-day, 310,000-acre park.

Sprawling over 3.4 million acres, the Bridger-Teton National Forest shows the most dramatic proof that the nearby fault line remains active. A 1-mile section of Sheep Mountain northeast of Jackson gave way on June 23, 1925, damming the Gros Ventre River to form Lower Slide Lake. Just two years later the dam collapsed, flooding the small town of Kelly. A sign posted to mark the site of the Gros Ventre Slide reads, “Before you lie the remnants of one of the largest earth movements in the world.”

**Gov. Trumbull’s War Office**

Jonathan Trumbull and his Council of Safety met at the War Office more than 500 times to secure food, arms, and soldiers for the patriot cause. Through their efforts Connecticut became known as “The Provisions State.”

“A long and well spent life in the service of his country, justly entitled [Trumbull] to the first place among patriots.”

George Washington

For more information, contact: Connecticut SAR, PO Box 411 East Haddam, CT 06423 Visit and learn more at www.ConnecticutSAR.org.
Just as critical as preserving Jackson Hole’s landscape was protecting the native wildlife, especially the large herd of elk that descends from higher ground to winter in the valley. The elk herd’s numbers declined sharply in the late 1800s and early 1900s as many animals died of starvation, after encroaching settlers and livestock greatly reduced the size of their habitat. Public pleas to help the elk were answered in 1912 by the creation of the National Elk Refuge. The 24,700-acre refuge now shelters 5,000–8,000 wintering elk and many other species.

An Old West Town

Anchoring downtown Jackson is the town square, which features an archway of elk antlers at each corner. A remnant of Jackson’s early days, the Van Vleck House, a one-story log cabin built from 1910–1911, still stands at its original location adjacent to the town square. The nearby Wort Hotel debuted as the town’s first luxury hotel in 1941. Nine years later, the hotel’s saloon, the Silver Dollar Bar, installed its signature feature: a serpentine bar inlaid with 2,032 uncirculated 1921 silver dollars.

The town’s eateries offer opportunities to sample the local big game, such as elk and bison, as well as trout, plentiful in the nearby rivers. Huckleberries, which grow wild in the area, populate various breakfast offerings, desserts, jams and beverages.

Dozens of downtown galleries offer paintings, photography, sculpture, pottery, handcrafted furniture and American Indian works, many of which are inspired by the Western countryside. Art lovers can also visit the National Museum of Wildlife Art overlooking the National Elk Refuge to see its extensive public collection.
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When it came to envisioning a literally revolutionary new form of government, Thomas Jefferson was almost without peer. When it came to being governor of a fractious, nearly insolvent state during wartime, however, Jefferson proved far less apt. Allegations of incompetence and outright cowardice haunted him for the rest of his life.

Michael Kranish’s Flight from Monticello: Thomas Jefferson at War (Oxford University Press, 2010) does not gloss over or excuse Jefferson’s shortcomings as Virginia’s governor. Instead, Kranish supplies context and background for the obstacles Jefferson faced in the performance of his duty.

On June 1, 1779, the Virginia legislature elected Jefferson to a one-year term as governor. In retrospect, Jefferson was an odd choice for a wartime governor, since he had no military experience. But, Kranish notes, the legislature was looking for new leadership.

Jefferson inherited a desk full of problems. The war had cut Virginia’s tobacco exports to practically nothing, and tax collections were in arrears. Virginia also lagged in meeting quotas of soldiers for the Continental Army, while its militia’s fighting ability left much to be desired. Governors had limited executive powers under Virginia’s constitution, which delayed or prevented him from moving decisively to build military readiness before a crisis was upon him, Kranish says.

Until 1780, Virginia remained relatively unscathed by the kind of fighting that raged to the north and south. Virginia ports served as entry points for desperately needed goods and supplies for the rest of the South. Ending that flow would be of great strategic value in defeating the rebellion.

By the time the legislature re-elected Jefferson in 1780 to another one-year term, Virginia’s interlude was ending. The British had already made brief forays from the sea that demonstrated the state’s lack of military readiness. In late 1780, American hero-turned-traitor Benedict Arnold led a force of 1,600 men who sailed from New York to invade Virginia. Arnold met little resistance as he terrorized the region around the James River. Never fully trusted by the British, Arnold was placed under the command of William Phillips. A British officer who had been a prisoner of war near Monticello and who knew the countryside well, Phillips aimed to cut the supply lines.

Lord Cornwallis, whom rebels had harried in North Carolina, decided to bring his army to Virginia to bolster the forces under Phillips and Arnold. Cornwallis’s telling of the invasion and rampage through Virginia unfolds like a novel, with shifting allegiances, complexly interwoven personal relationships and jealous rivalries.

We see Jefferson struggling against a feckless legislature, constitutionally limited power, an undependable and sometimes mutinous militia, and deep concerns about the fragile health of his wife and young daughters.

In May 1781, just before his term was to end, Jefferson wrote the legislature resigning the governorship, saying Virginia needed someone better suited to be a wartime leader. But his lowest moment was still to come.

In early June, British troops swept into Charlottesville hunting for the former governor. Warned by a close friend, Jack Jouett, who made an epic 40-mile ride to warn that the Redcoats were on his heels, Jefferson used his intimate knowledge of the countryside to slip away and relocate his family at a remote estate he owned, Poplar Forest. There he learned the legislature planned to censure him for his poor performance in office.

With Virginia on the brink of collapse, the British commander in New York, General Henry Clinton, ordered the army to pull back to the coast and return all available men to New York to defend against an anticipated attack by the Continental Army. Led now by Cornwallis, the army withdrew to Yorktown, where they were defeated.

Kranish notes that Jefferson spent much of the rest of his life trying to justify his actions. Although the state legislature ultimately commended rather than censured him, his performance came up again each time he ran for president. Without exonerating Jefferson, Kranish provides a balanced portrait of that harrowing time.

—Bill Hudgins
Greatest Toy on Earth

The Schoenhut Humpty-Dumpty Circus was an American-made toy popular from its introduction in 1903 until the 1930s. Schoenhut’s Circus grew to include more than 60 animals and performers, three rings with canvas tents, and parade wagons. Consumers could choose individual pieces to create whatever combination of animals and characters they desired. The people and animals were made with elastic and ball joints that could be arranged in realistic poses. The acrobats and other performers could even be positioned on the trapeze or high-wire.

Unlike many other toys of the time, the circus was intended for use by both boys and girls, and it was marketed as such. This was an innovation in the toy industry, which even today markets most toys to one gender or the other.

The DAR Museum’s circus is part of the Merritt Collection of toys donated by Jacqueline Ernest Merritt in 2006.
Long before Americans began their love affair with the automobile, they were passionate about the bicycle. The two-wheeled mechanical horse represented freedom and independence for people who had always relied on horses, train schedules or their own two feet to get them from one place to another.

THE REVOLUTION OF BICYCLES

BY NANCY MANN JACKSON

SOME PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF THE BICYCLE MUSEUM OF AMERICA
NEW BREMEN, OHIO
“If you weren’t in on it, you were out of it. They were a way of life.”

CARL BURGWARDT, PEDALING HISTORY BICYCLE MUSEUM
The bicycle offered an opportunity for many Americans to discover their inner restlessness, leading to new understandings of what it means to really be free.

“The bicycle 100 years ago was as popular as the personal computer is today,” says Carl Burgwardt, curator of the Orchard Park, N.Y.-based Pedaling History Bicycle Museum, which tells the story of bicycles from an American perspective. “If you weren’t in on it, you were out of it. They were a way of life.”

THE BICYCLE’S BEGINNINGS

Forerunner to the bicycle, the velocipede came to America in 1819. These early two-wheeled machines were crudely built and lacked pedals. Instead, they were kick-propelled balancing machines. “At first it was exciting that there might be a mechanical horse that people could use and do away with the feeding and caring for a [real] horse,” says David Herlihy, author of Bicycle: The History (Yale University Press, 2004) and The Lost Cyclist (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010). “Around 1819, there were about 200 of these kick-propelled machines in the United States. But soon people realized it wore out your heels. It just wasn’t very practical, so people lost interest.”

It took almost 50 years for French inventors to transform the pedal-less velocipede concept into the basic bicycle and take their invention west to America. “In 1867, after the two-wheeler had been abandoned for decades, Parisians began noticing two-wheelers barreling down the boulevards with pedals attached to the front hub,” Herlihy says. Even though the velocipedes, or boneshakers, of the period made for an uncomfortable ride, “it was quite exciting, and the concept came to the United States rather quickly,” Herlihy says.

While the French recognize blacksmith Pierre Michaux as the inventor of the bicycle, another Frenchman, Pierre Lallement, actually applied for and was awarded the only patent for a pedal bicycle. Lallement left France in 1865 to go to Connecticut, where he built an improved version of his bicycle and began hunting for investors to help him manufacture the machines.

An April 5, 1866, article in the New Haven Daily Palladium described Lallement’s demonstration of his new vehicle: “An enterprising individual propell’d himself about the Green last evening on a curious frame sustained by two wheels, one before the other, and driven by foot cranks.” Herlihy helped post a historic marker at the site to commemorate that first American bicycle ride.

Lallement, with the help of an investor, applied for a patent shortly after this incident, and it was awarded to him that November. Still, he had a difficult time convincing American carriage makers to begin manufacturing bicycles. Within a few years, however, bicycles were popular in Paris, so American manufacturers caught on. The bicycle became quite a fad; 20,000 of them were made during a matter of months in 1869. “That’s a pretty big number, given that there was really no mass production,” Herlihy says.

Bicycle rinks—where people would go to watch bike races or rent the machines and take riding lessons—opened up across the country. Although these early bikes weighed about 90 pounds and lacked ball bearings, they were hyped as “a revolution in road travel,” Herlihy says.
Soon bikes evolved into high-wheelers, lighter vehicles with a huge wheel in front—sometimes 5 feet tall—and a small wheel in the back. While the high-wheeler—sometimes called a penny-farthing—was more practical, “it was intimidating,” Herlihy says. “It was all about recreation and bonding—a man’s machine, and a young man at that, because they weren’t easy to ride.”

In 1878, during the high-wheeler craze, Albert Pope, a retired Civil War colonel with an entrepreneurial bent, started a small business in Boston, importing and selling English bicycles. Eventually, he bought Lallement’s 1866 patent and began manufacturing his own version of the high-wheeler. The first prototype cost $313 and weighed 70 pounds, according to Annette Thompson, curator of the Bicycle Museum of America in New Bremen, Ohio. Pope soon turned that prototype into the mass-produced, more affordable Columbia Bicycle.

Often called the father of the industry, Pope was credited at the time as the first to make American bicycles, with the notion being that the vehicles made a decade earlier in the United States were not worthy of such a lofty term, Herlihy says. Still, Pope’s high-wheeler bicycle of 1879 operated on essentially the same principle as the velocipede bicycle of 1869, notably the rotary pedals attached to the front hub.

“Pope took it upon himself to personally start a revolution,” Burgwardt says. “He actually created a monopoly and controlled the manufacturing of bikes in America for 30 years.”

When the safety, a new bicycle design with equal-sized wheels, was introduced in the mid-1880s, the market was ready. By 1897, more than 2 million bicycles had been sold in the United States. And the machines became more than just a young man’s entertainment; they became vehicles of change.

**CHANGING THE WORLD**

The safety was more practical for women to ride than the high-wheeler, and by the time the bicycle boom started in about 1893, men weren’t the only ones involved. “[Bicycles] were quite a rage all over the country,” Herlihy says. “There were still some rinks, but more people were riding outdoors and wheelmen’s clubs were established.”

Even though they were still rather expensive, many people acquired a bicycle during the boom of the 1890s, according to Herlihy. The price began to fall substantially after the bust of 1897.

As more people took to the roads on their bicycles, the country’s lack of a modern road system became apparent. “Machines pulled by horses would scrape the roads and improve the surface for bicycles, so later they were ready for cars,” Thompson says.

The bicycle had a big impact on women’s lives, beginning with their fashion. “To ride a bike in the typical Victorian dress was next to impossible, so a ‘rational dress’ movement started,” says Jan Heine, editor of Bicycle Quarterly and author of The Competition Bicycle: A Photographic History (Vintage Bicycle Press, 2009).

The movement called for social acceptance of bloomers, or baggy trousers, for women rather than the traditional layers of undergarments covered by a hoop skirt. Such a change in dress made sense for cyclists, and for some women, the taste of freedom that cycling afforded...
fed their desire to loosen the grip of a male-dominated society. But it wasn’t a simple change. Plenty of critics said cycling was detrimental to female health and even more believed that women’s cycling clothes were morally reprehensible.

Peter Zheutlin, author of *Around the World on Two Wheels* (Citadel, 2007), cites an 1895 Iowa State Register article that said doctors at the Mississippi Valley Medical Congress in Detroit that year endorsed cycling as healthful exercise for men and women. However, the delegates “unanimously declared [bloomers] to be an abomination and the cause of lowering their wearers in the eyes of spectators.” No medical reason was cited, Zheutlin says.

Cycling didn’t just change women’s ideas about clothing; it also gave them newfound independence. “Bicycles did wonders for women; it was the first time many ever got out of the eye of a chaperone,” Thompson says. “When bicycles built for two became popular, there was only room for two, so young couples finally got away from their chaperones.”

“The rational dress movement also changed how women were perceived,” Heine says. “One could argue that once women had fought for the right to wear trousers, they didn’t stop, and asked for the right to vote as well.”

Indeed, the bicycle boom coincided with and arguably aided the early women’s movement. In 1896, early feminist Susan B. Anthony told the *New York World*’s Nellie Bly that bicycling had “done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world.”

“Bicycles did wonders for women; it was the first time many ever got out of the eye of a chaperone.”

– ANNETTE THOMPSON
Family Chronicle

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Riding to the Future

While bicycles led to cultural changes, the popularity they enjoyed during the Gay Nineties didn’t last. Its own revolutionary design led to more advanced forms of transportation. In fact, some of America’s transportation pioneers, such as Henry Ford and Orville and Wilbur Wright, started out as bicycle mechanics.

“The Wright brothers built their first airplane in the backyard of their bicycle shop,” Burgwardt says. “The power and mobility of Americans took hold after we got off the horse and had a taste of mechanical transportation.”

Once the bicycle was established, advancements quickly followed. A quarter of a century after Albert Pope began manufacturing bicycles in Boston, the first airplanes appeared, Burgwardt says.

While automobiles eventually became the symbol for individual freedom and adventure, “it was streetcars more than automobiles that ended the bicycle boom,” Heine says. “By the 1900s, bicycles lost their popularity as streetcar lines were built in most U.S. cities. Bicycle production collapsed, and the bicycle started its long descent into the realm of children’s toys.”

Aside from a revival in the 1950s and again in the 1970s due to the 10-speed craze, the bicycle has, in America, come to be seen primarily as a child’s toy. But recent interest in reducing the use of fossil fuels and fighting the obesity epidemic has led to a cycling resurgence.

“Individual mobility [via the automobile] is a privilege few want to give up,” Heine says. “Riding a bicycle provides at least a partial solution; it provides the freedom of a car, is almost as fast in city traffic, yet it doesn’t pollute and provides exercise to boot.

“Technologies that worked in 1940s Europe to keep riders dry and carry their loads are being rediscovered,” Heine says. “Modern lighting systems increase safety and convenience. It is an exciting time for bicycles, and the future looks bright. Perhaps we are seeing another bicycle boom, but one that may be more sustainable than previous ones.”

Nancy Mann Jackson wrote about the effects of pollution and climate change on historic structures for the January/February issue.
There’s no better feeling than celebrating America—and here’s a fashion exclusive that does! You’ll love this luxuriously quilted carryall bag bearing the patriotic red, white and blue designs of artist Mary Ann Lasher. It has two interior pockets and zips closed to protect all your valuables. This bag is a perfect fit for everyday use and its classic design will never go out of style. Plus, you’ll also get two FREE coordinating, zippered cosmetic cases, if you order now!

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Visions of America

Relics of the days before roads were paved and concrete interstates snaked across the country, these woodworking masterpieces hearken back to an era when bridges connected communities and provided passage to a wider world for pioneers eager to explore beyond the boundaries of their villages and towns. Built for the simple function of allowing settlers to cross from one bank to the next, they evolved into much more as economic ambition pushed the nation westward along a growing network of roads. Covered bridges were used to transport supplies between villages, trade goods and advertise products. In time, they also became focal points for church revivals, political rallies, christenings, baptisms, weddings and funerals.

Standing in a darkened covered bridge stirs curiosity about not only the early Americans who crossed it, but also those who built it. With nothing but crude tools, virgin timber and their own ingenuity on which to rely, the craftsmen who built these bridges turned them into civil engineering feats that were both aesthetically pleasing and architecturally sound. “Just the structure alone is fascinating,” says David Wright, president of the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges. “Each one is unique, and most of the truss types you find in them are strictly American inventions. It’s a tribute to our ancestors that they were able to use the materials around them to create something so beautiful and useful.”

Debuting in Philadelphia at the turn of the 19th century, covered bridges reached their pinnacle as the pioneer spirit swept the nation, and thrived even after the railroad arrived on the scene. More than 10,000 of these bridges dotted the American landscape in 1870. As metal eclipsed wood construction at the century’s end and weather, age and urban sprawl took their toll, the bridges disappeared by the thousands—some falling prey to arson and vandalism and others to nature and neglect. Today, just 750 remain. While states in the Northeastern region of the country, particularly New Hampshire and Vermont, are the best known for their surviving bridges, they are also abundant throughout Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Oregon. Few are still traveled, but most continue to evoke a mystique that inspires landscape artists, perpetuates folklore and sparks nostalgia for travelers who bypass highways and brave bumpy back roads to find and photograph them. Travel with American Spirit as we tour these bridges of our past.

Covered bridges have long captured the imagination of Americans, offering a portal into a slower-paced, less hectic time in history when life moved at the speed of a horse and buggy.
Visions of America

Before there were bridges, Americans used felled trees or split logs (often called stringers) to cross the small streams and creeks abundant in the Northeast. Sometimes additional logs were attached over the timbers and at the ends of the stringer to add support, but as towns sprang up along these waterways, villagers needed a less perilous way to travel for school, worship and supplies. Drawing on a Middle Ages prototype for wooden bridges constructed in Europe, 18th-century builders began incorporating trusses into bridges. This strengthened the construction by creating joints between timbers where wear and tear took place. To further protect these spots from the elements, wooden enclosures, known as boxed trusses, were built around these areas, with slanted roofs to keep runoff away from the floor, creating wide, triangular walls that bordered the sides and set the stage for covered bridges.

Why Cover Bridges?
There are several theories as to why bridges were covered. Some say that because the entrance resembled a barn, it made it easier to drive animals across, especially horses, which tended to balk when crossing high over running water. While covered bridges did make it easier for those with horses or cattle to cross, they were mostly used to protect the bridge from a harsh climate and keep oiled timbers dry and less slippery through rain and snow. The roof and sides also strengthened the bridge, extending its life span from 10 to 80 years, and helped it to blend naturally into the landscape because of its resemblance to a house or barn.

The First Covered Bridge
American covered bridges evolved during the turn of the 19th century in Philadelphia, a burgeoning industrial center at the time. Philadelphians relied on small ferries and rickety floating bridges to cross the Schuylkill River, but the city needed something more convenient to prosper and expand. The first person to offer a solution was Charles Wilson Peale, the famous portraitist of George Washington. Peale designed a 390-foot wooden structure with arcing trusses to span the river and received the first bridge patent in 1797 for his design. But he never saw it erected.

Instead the city’s Permanent Bridge Company proceeded with plans to construct a cast-iron span across stone piers. Unable to find any American foundries that could produce the amount of iron required, the company hired Peale’s contemporary, Timothy Palmer, to construct a two-lane wooden bridge, 550 feet in length and 42 feet in width, reinforced by three stone piers. Palmer thought his work was complete when the bridge opened on January 1, 1805, but due to the company’s concerns over the bridge’s exposure to the elements and the costly repairs it might

Did you know?
During the 19th century, many covered bridges were operated for toll, and those who rode horses or ran cattle across the bridge were charged a fine to compensate for the damage of the pounding hooves on the wooden floors. When traveling circuses came through, elephants were charged a special rate just to cross. Some bridges still have signs posted with special rules like “no smoking segars [sic]” or traveling over the bridge “faster than a walk.”

This bridge across the Zumbro River was built in 1869 and is Minnesota’s last remaining covered bridge. First moved in 1932, it is now at Covered Bridge Park in Zumbrota, Minn.
Clockwise from top left:

Covered bridges span the country, adding a nostalgic feel to the towns they populate. The Roseman Covered Bridge is one of seven bridges in Madison County, Iowa, an area which gained fame as the setting for the best-selling novel *The Bridges of Madison County.* • A full moon illuminates the Lowell Covered Bridge, which crosses a waterway near Eugene, Ore. • In Randolph County, N.C., Pisgah Covered Bridge blends perfectly with the rustic backdrop. • The Middle Road Bridge in Ashtabula County, Ohio, was originally built in 1868 and reconstructed in 1984 with the help of volunteers and college students. • Also crossing the Ashtabula River in Ohio is this recently constructed two-lane covered bridge designed by John Smolen. At 613 feet, it’s considered the longest covered bridge in the country.
Clockwise from top:

Ohio and Indiana have an abundance of restored and surviving covered bridges. Netcher Road Bridge crosses over a waterway in Ashtabula County, Ohio. • The Dick Huffman Covered Bridge towers above a creek in Putnam County, Ind. • The Root Road Bridge, built in 1868, crosses the Ashtabula River, Ohio. • Sunlight streams through the interior of the Thompson Mill Covered Bridge in Shelby County, Ill.
cause, he was ordered to enclose the sides and add a roof.

The Visionaries
Local craftsmen built most of the covered bridges that rose up throughout the countryside during the early 1800s. As bridge building boomed, these innovators experimented and adapted each other’s designs to create ways to build stronger spans with fewer materials. One of the earliest visionaries was German immigrant Lewis Wernwag, famous for constructing Philadelphia’s 340-foot Colossus, the second-largest single-span covered bridge at the time. Wernwag disdained the early covered bridges he saw, describing them as “barnlike structures that Americans are throwing across their rivers.” His design introduced a flared king post flanked by a double arch at the center of the bridge, which brought grace to the structure and strengthened the span. Another prolific builder was New Yorker Theodore Burr, whose truss consisting of a large arch between two king posts on either side of the bridge allowed for level floors over large spans. His designs were so widely copied that many bridges on the western frontier were called Burrs. Connecticut builder Ithiel Town developed one of the covered bridges’ most enduring features—a lattice truss of diagonally crossed beams placed along each side of the structure. His design allowed bridges to be constructed of shorter timbers, which became popular as a cheaper, more practical option. As trains began crossing the country, Colonel Stephen Long created a crossed-beam truss that made it feasible for trains to travel over wooden bridges. Massachusetts builder William Howe took Col. Long’s truss design and added iron rods to critical tension spots to improve support for rail travel.

Legend and Lore
The dark depths of covered bridges have always fascinated those who have ventured through them. Traveling through the tunnel, time seems to stand still. Though outside they might become a billboard for faded advertisements, inside “they stayed bright, securely tacked, dry and unweathered as the years passed,” wooden bridge historian Richard Sanders Allen wrote in his 1957 book, Covered Bridges of the Northeast.

The wind whistling through the timbers gave the bridges a spooky feel and led to many ghost stories—some connected to deaths that occurred on or near the bridges. In Washington Irving’s 1820 short story, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” a covered bridge in a New York town is the spot where Ichabod Crane confronts his nemesis, the Headless Horseman.

For courting couples, covered bridges offered rendezvous points away from the prying eyes of chaperones and the perfect opportunity to steal a kiss in the dark during an afternoon ride. In some towns, when a young couple in a buggy passed through one of these kissing or wishing bridges, it was traditional for a man to be granted a kiss from his sweetheart.

A Slice of Americana
Between 1870 and 1970, Allen estimates that 90 percent of the country’s covered bridges were destroyed by natural causes, advances in transportation and arsonists. But during the latter decades of the 20th century, the nation’s nostalgia and efforts to preserve the bridges sparked interest in them again, and their popularity resurfaced. They became inspirational subjects for artists and advertisers, who used them to promote everything from tires to thermal underwear.

Many of the bridges that have survived still bear the name of a family or a nearby farm. From plank-sided spans with the saltbox roofs common in the Northeast to more open lattice-like structures, each one has unique characteristics. Pennsylvania contains more than 200 preserved bridges, with a concentration in Lancaster County, where the Amish still travel them daily.

Vermont has fewer bridges, but more per square mile than any other state. Parke County, Ind., which calls itself the “Covered Bridge Capital of the World,” celebrates its 30 covered bridges during an annual festival, which started in 1957. Madison County, Iowa, the setting for the 1992 best-seller The Bridges of Madison County, is also famous for its seven bridges. Fewer remain in the South and West, but Oregon has many surviving bridges, built of hardy Douglas fir and redwood abundant in the area. Some bridges have been renovated with concrete footings and steel trusses to hold more weight, but the best restorations use 19th-century architecture and materials, Wright says.

“If you look at covered bridges built in the 19th century, they’re very efficient,” Wright says. “There was not a wasted gesture. They have an austerity and simplicity that is very appealing.”

“\textbf{We crossed the river by a wooden bridge, roofed and covered on all sides, and nearly a mile in length. It was profoundly dark; perplexed with great beams crossing and recrossing it at every possible angle; and through broad chinks and crevices in the floor, the rapid river gleamed, far down below, like a legion of eyes. We had not lamps; and as the horses stumbled and floundered through this place, toward the distant speck of dying light, it seemed interminable.”}\n
> British author Charles Dickens, on crossing a covered bridge in Harrisburg, Pa., during his 1842 tour across America.
SACRIFICE FOR INDEPENDENCE

REMEMBERING REVOLUTIONARY POWS

(By Lena Anthony)
Housing was scarce in late 18th-century New York City—the British headquarters during the Revolutionary War—where the majority of the prisoners were taken. After the British took control of the city, throngs of loyalist refugees came flooding in, explains Edwin Burrows in Forgotten Patriots (Basic Books, 2008). “The competition for housing became so intense that many residents wound up pitching tents in the burned-over blocks west of Broadway, a neighborhood promptly dubbed ‘Canvas Town,’” he writes. “There and everywhere, overflowing privies and open pools of human waste caused widespread sickness as well as an unpleasant odor that hung over the town even in winter.”

If that’s how free British citizens lived, then it should be no surprise that more Americans died in British prisons than on the battlefield. Modern historians estimate that British prisons claimed more than 18,000 American lives, compared to 6,800 Americans killed in action and another 10,000 who died in camps from illness or infection, according to Burrows.

CAPTIVES’ QUARTERS

American prisoners were held in various places during the war, including Nova Scotia, Quebec, Philadelphia and Savannah, Ga. Charleston, S.C., also served as a major detention center, holding more than 3,300 American captives in stockades and “four reeking, scandalously overcrowded prison ships,” Burrows writes.

About 3,000 prisoners, mostly seamen, were transported to Great Britain for detention in old houses and gaols in Ireland. Scotland and England, explains Sheldon S. Cohen in Yankee Sailors in British Gaols (University of Delaware, 1995). One American prisoner, Henry Laurens, who was on a mission to Holland for the Continental Congress when he was captured in 1780, was held in the Tower of London for more than a year and was eventually exchanged for Lord Cornwallis.

However, the majority of American prisoners languished in New York City—in public buildings hastily and haphazardly outfitted as prisons and, later, on infamous prison ships anchored off the shores of Brooklyn. Burrows estimates that 32,000 Americans were detained in and around the city during the Revolution.

At the beginning of the war, most prisoners were held on land. The British began using prison ships in 1776, but primarily to hold prisoners before transferring them back to shore. During 1776–1777, at least 13 separate prisons were established in New York City, according to Larry Bowman in Captive Americans: Prisoners During the American Revolution (Ohio University Press, 1976). “Most of these 13 hastily created prisons functioned only for a short time.”

One of the most notorious prisons, which operated for the duration of the war, was the provost marshal’s jail, or the Provost, for short. “Originally designed to serve as the municipal jail, it had six cells on each of its top two floors and three large vaults in the cellar, which functioned as dungeons,” Burrows writes. “An average of 10 men [were] locked up day and night in a cell that probably measured 20 feet by 30 [feet] and held little or no furniture other than the ‘necessary tubs’ in which they relieved themselves.”

On August 27, 1776, the British handed the Continental Army a decisive defeat at the Battle of Long Island, effectively forcing General George Washington and his troops out of New York City until the end of the war. Of the approximately 10,000 Americans who fought in the two-day battle, more than 1,000 were captured. It was a monumental victory for the British, but it posed one problem—WHERE WOULD THEY KEEP ALL OF THEIR PRISONERS?
Another New York building that became a British prison was the North Dutch Church, which, according to Burrows, could accommodate as many as 800 men after removing the pews and laying planks between the balconies to create a second floor.

For prisoners who languished on one of the 26 prison ships, overcrowding was even more of a problem. “Most of each 24-hour period the prisoners were confined between decks,” Bowman writes. “Each day small groups of the inmates were allowed topside for brief periods, but the escape from the desperately crowded conditions was infrequent for each man. … In a heavily populated vessel a prisoner might wait for several days until his turn to go topside came again.”

Captain Thomas Dring, who was a prisoner aboard the Jersey, recalled his first night on the ship in his memoir, Recollections of the Jersey Prison Ship, published in 1829. An excerpt:

“The thought of sleep did not enter my mind: and at length, discovering a glimmering of light through the iron gratings of one of the air-ports, I felt that it would be indeed a luxury, if I could but obtain a situation near that place, in order to gain one breath of the exterior air,” he wrote. “Clenching my hand firmly around my bag, which I dared not leave, I began to advance towards the side of the ship; but was soon greeted with the curses and imprecations of those who were lying on the deck, and whom I had disturbed in attempting to pass over them. I however persevered, and at length arrived near the desired spot; but found it already occupied, and no persuasion could induce a single individual to relinquish his place for a moment.”

A DEATH SENTENCE

Even more dangerous than the cramped conditions was the severe hunger experienced by American prisoners. Death literally surrounded them, in large part due to the scarce, spoiled provisions they received. According to Burrows, the American prisoners should have received two-thirds of what the regular-duty British soldiers would have eaten each week, which was “seven pounds of bread and seven of beef, supplemented by what were called ‘small species’—four ounces of butter or cheese, eight ounces of oatmeal, three pints of peas, and perhaps a few ounces of rice, if available.”

The problem grew worse when the British army didn’t receive its full allotment. “Quite often stockpiles shrank to the point that the army had to go on short rations,” Burrows says. “When that happened, prisoners inevitably got less food and the poorest food—if they got food at all.”
A Connecticut soldier named Samuel Young recalled waiting two days for food from his British captors, and when he finally received it, the rations were hardly edible: “A quantity of biscuits in crumbs, mostly mouldy [sic], and some of them crawling with maggots,” he wrote. Burrows wrote about another Connecticut soldier, Thomas Stone, who “remembered that ‘old shoes were bought and eaten with as good a relish as a pig or a turkey.’” Alden Burrows Blodget, a soldier from Massachusetts who was detained in one of the New York sugar houses—former sugar refineries that were converted to prisons—admitted to surviving by eating garbage.

Burrows also introduces readers to Levi Hanford, a Connecticut soldier detained in a sugar house who wrote how he and his fellow inmates prepared their stale biscuits and raw pork: “The biscuit was such as had been wet with sea water and damaged, was full of worms and mouldy. It was common practice to put water in our camp kettle, then break up the biscuit into it, skim off the worms, put in the pork, and boil it, if we had the fuel... when we could get no fuel, we ate our meat raw and our biscuit dry. Starved as we were, there was nothing in the shape of food that was rejected or was unpalatable.”

Reports from Philadelphia included stories of American prisoners attempting to eat bark, clay and stones to survive, and one surgeon, Albigeonce Waldo, even reported that an American held captive in Philadelphia ate his own finger, “up to the first joint from the hand, before he died,” according to Burrows. Malnutrition combined with cramped, unsanitary conditions translated into rampant disease among the prisoners. “Because malnutrition impairs the body’s immune function, they became easy prey to typhus, dysentery and other infectious diseases of the skin, lungs and gastrointestinal tract,” Burrows says. “The lack of fresh fruit and vegetables in their diet led to a chronic vitamin C deficiency, guaranteeing that many would also experience the bleeding gums, open sores, tooth loss and listlessness that were the symptoms of scurvy.”

Illness, however, did not give prisoners reprieve from their abusive captors, who, Burrows says, were known to beat those who were too weak to even stand up.

Word quickly got back to leaders like General George Washington that their men were suffering deplorable conditions in British prisons. The Americans implored the British to exchange the prisoners or at least allow them to bring in proper food, clothing and medical care. Their angry protests fell on deaf ears. The more colonists heard about the prisoners’ abuse, the more fervent they felt about winning the war. “If the enemy’s cruelty thus legitimated the Revolution,” Burrows writes, “it also served as a warning that should they fail, all Americans would be treated like the prisoners in New York.”

AN OFFICER IS A GENTLEMAN

Not all prisoners were subjected to severe mistreatment. The British officers, considering themselves gentlemen, treated some American officers with a measure of respect. For lower-rank officers, that might have meant imprisonment in Liberty House, the pre-war headquarters of the New York Sons of Liberty. Although it was cramped inside, prisoners housed there “could walk around the tiny outside yard,” Burrows writes. They were also allowed to purchase additional provisions some days of the week and could accept donated food and clothing from city

THE FATE OF BRITISH PRISONERS

Most histories of the Revolutionary War focus on the British mistreatment of American prisoners, but the loyalists and British soldiers held by the Continental Army were often treated poorly, too, says Edwin Burrows in Forgotten Patriots (Basic Books, 2008).

Burrows writes that “Washington had assured Cornwallis that his men would receive ‘the benevolent treatment of prisoners which is invariably observed by the Americans.’... Since the war began, Americans had been congratulating themselves for handling enemy captives with ‘the most remarkable tenderness and generosity’ and ‘moderation and humanity.’” But Burrows guesses that Washington knew better, having fielded “numerous other complaints over the years from enemy prisoners about bad food, squalor and physical abuse.”

Captured loyalists were held in various locations in the Colonies, including New London, Conn., and the Albemarle Barracks outside Charlottesville, Va., which was home to more than 4,100 British and Hessians captured at the Battle of Saratoga, explains Michael Kranish in Flight From Monticello (Oxford, 2010). Thomas Jefferson even petitioned Congress to send prisoners to Virginia, believing they “would bring money to buy local goods and that among them were craftsmen who could be put to good use at the area’s plantations,” Kranish writes.

Congress approved the relocation, and the prisoners marched from Boston to Virginia in “bitter winter conditions, with scarce rations and thin clothing,” Kranish writes. “As the prisoners reached the barracks in January 1779, they beheld an appalling sight: half-constructed log cabins, few provisions and a landscape swirling in snow.”

Conditions eventually improved, and the “barracks became a lively center, with its own store, coffeehouse, large church and taverns,” Kranish writes. Jefferson, an avid musician, befriended some of the officers, and even invited Friedrich Wilhelm von Geismar, a Hessian officer and violinist, to accompany him on the violin at Monticello.
residents who felt pity for them. Other officers were held and worked in the homes and on the farms of loyalists around New York City. They were on parole, but unable to leave the city.

For General Charles Lee, who was one of the highest-ranking American officers to be captured by the British, prison meant something else entirely. While he awaited parole, Lee received his own private room in City Hall, and “got all the firewood and candles he needed, without charge, and enjoyed lavish dinners with whatever wine and liquor he desired, all at His Majesty’s expense,” Burrows writes. “In time, [Commander General William] Howe even let Lee bring in his Italian manservant and one of his beloved dogs. Other than the fact that he could not go outside … Lee had nothing to complain about.”

UPON RELEASE

While death was a reality facing American prisoners, it wasn’t the only outcome. Many captives were either released or escaped. Some prisoners were part of partial exchanges, in which the Continental Army negotiated for a certain number of their prisoners to be released in exchange for the release of British prisoners. In other cases, being extremely sick was grounds for release, although, as Burrows notes, many of those prisoners died on their way home or immediately upon returning home.

For others, there were two ways out: escaping or defecting to join their British captors.

However they got out, a former’s captive’s troubles were far from over once free. According to Burrows, from reading the journals and letters of prisoners, many likely experienced what today is known as post-traumatic stress disorder.

ANOTHER REASON FOR INDEPENDENCE

Experts point to several possible reasons as the cause for such inhumane treatment. Some say the British weren’t prepared for a war that lasted as long as it did, so were ill-equipped to house and feed prisoners for an extended period of time. Others argue that because Britain did not recognize America’s independence, viewing the colonists as rebels, it would not recognize the captives as proper prisoners of war, which would have afforded them much better treatment.

Whatever the cause, the fact remained that American prisoners suffered greatly at the hands of their captors. “The apparently systematic mistreatment of American prisoners [was] a kind of moral or psychological Rubicon,” Burrows writes. “Once crossed, there could be no compromise, no turning back, no restoration of the old connection between the Colonies and the mother country.”

Lena Anthony shared tips for finding female ancestors for a story in the January/February issue.

Do you have a Revolutionary Patriot in your family tree?

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WILLIAM GRAYSON and the CONSTITUTION 1788

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William Grayson was born in Woodbridge, Virginia in 1736. By 1774 he was a captain in the militia. Brilliantly educated in England, with a Law Degree from Oxford, William was a scholar in Latin, Greek and English History.

Personal friend and neighbor of his mentor George Washington, William served as Washington's secretary in the Continental Army, and as aide-de-camp. Given the rank of Colonel, Grayson fought in six battles over the course of 6 1/2 years and distinguished himself at the battle of Monmouth Courthouse. He then presided over the Court Marshall of General Charles Lee. Thereafter, Washington appointed him head of the Board of War where he worked with British General Howe in the exchange of prisoners captured at the battle of Valley Forge.

William served in the House of Burgess, the House of Delegates and the Continental Congress.

Elected to the Virginia Convention to ratify the Constitution in 1788, William led the debates along with his closest friends, Patrick Henry and his cousin James Monroe, along with George Mason and other Anti-Federalists, who wanted amendments to the Constitution. Of 179 members the Anti-Federalist’s lost by ten votes but gained a Bill of Rights.

William was elected senator to the first Federal Congress along with Richard Henry Lee in 1788. He died before he could serve a second term. James Monroe took his cousin and mentor’s seat in Congress.

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Horatio Gates was born in 1728 in Malden, England. His parents, as chief domestic servants to the Duke of Leeds, were able to obtain a commission for young Horatio as an officer in training in the British army.

As a young British army officer, Gates was assigned to service in America, and served stints in Canada, the Caribbean and New York. Though not considered a battlefield officer, Gates earned a reputation as an excellent administrator and supply officer. In the French and Indian War, he served as quartermaster of the British troops under General Braddock in his disastrous attack on Pittsburgh. Allied with these troops was a Colonial regiment under a young Virginia colonel named George Washington. Although Gates had some success in the 1760s in organizing and coordinating an attack for his commander in Martinique, he never received the hoped-for promotion. By 1772, he retired from the British army in disgust at his failure to advance, which he may have attributed to his lack of aristocratic birth. With his military pension, he decided to purchase land in Virginia, not far from George Washington’s brother Samuel.

Every Fourth of July for the past 13 years, I have carried out a tradition. I rise just after midnight to lead a walking tour of Revolutionary sites in Lower Manhattan in the hours before dawn. Why do I do this?

As one who has worked in New York for more than 35 years, I have had the opportunity to learn much about the storied city's place in history, especially the early American era. I started leading tours in the hopes of passing along that knowledge, especially of the little-known figures and important places connected to the War of Independence.

Lower Manhattan contains the graves of three significant Revolutionary War generals: Richard Montgomery, leader of the Battle of Quebec; Alexander Hamilton, the commander of the final assault at Yorktown and later Secretary of the Treasury; and Horatio Gates, commanding officer of the victorious American troops at Saratoga. General Montgomery’s grave is well-marked in front of St. Paul’s Church on Broadway and Vesey Street, as is the grave of Alexander Hamilton on the south side of Trinity Church graveyard. However, the grave of General Gates, who was buried in Trinity Church graveyard after his death in 1806, is lost and unmarked. In the hopes of restoring his legacy, I conduct the tour to help others understand Gates’ significance to our nation’s founding.
Once in America, Gates took an active interest in the developing dispute between England and the Colonies. Like his fellow English immigrants Thomas Paine and his friend Charles Lee, Gates was a bitter opponent of the British monarchical system and a strong supporter of American independence. After active hostilities broke out at Lexington and Concord, he immediately offered his services to Washington, who had him appointed adjutant general of the army, an administrative post. When Washington took command of the American army at Cambridge, Mass., after the Battle of Bunker Hill, Gates became a key member of his staff.

Gates’ efficiency in keeping the troops at Cambridge supplied, as well as his ardent support for the American cause, soon brought him to the attention of Massachusetts politicians John Adams and Samuel Adams. In 1776, he was appointed by Congress to lead all operations in Canada, but after the American defeat at the Battle of Quebec, such operations ceased. At the same time, Congress placed Philip Schuyler, a wealthy, politically connected land owner with deep ties to the state’s militias, in charge of operations in New York.

In 1776 Lord Howe, the British commander in North America, defeated Washington at the Battle of Long Island, causing the American army to abandon New York. After the battles of Brandywine and Germantown in 1777, the American army was also forced to leave Philadelphia. The prospects for the American cause looked increasingly bleak. A third British force under General Johnny Burgoyne, consisting of 10,000 regular British and Hessian troops, plus 2,000 American Indians, was on its way from Canada intent on taking Albany and the Hudson River. It appeared that if Burgoyne succeeded in his goal of reaching Albany, the Revolutionary War would be over.

With the Continental Army under Washington pinned down and defeated in Pennsylvania, the only American hope to stop Burgoyne would be for the approximately 6,000 New York troops under Schuyler, in conjunction with New England militia companies, to make a unified stand.

Unfortunately, there was considerable friction between the two groups. The New England militia distrusted the aristocratic Schuyler. Similarly, the New York troops refused to serve under a New England commander. In early July, Fort Ticonderoga, the supposedly impregnable fortress blocking the route to Lake George, fell to Burgoyne when General Arthur St. Clair found the fort indefensible and called for a retreat. The situation seemed hopeless—unless by some miracle a commander could quickly convince the different militias to work together and rally to defeat the British.

**Rallying the Troops for Saratoga**

After the Patriot retreat from Fort Ticonderoga, the Continental Congress voted to replace Schuyler with Gen. Gates as commander of the entire army in the North. Gates was a supply officer who had never progressed beyond the rank of major in the British army, and he had never commanded troops in a major battle. To many, including Washington, he hardly seemed like the commander who could lead the American troops to victory.

Gates immediately called on the New England militias to set aside their sectional differences and join him and the New York troops at Albany. He also wrote a letter to Burgoyne, his former comrade in the British army, in which he strongly protested the British policy of encouraging hostile American Indian tribes to attack American settlers who did not swear loyalty to the British. Militiamen from throughout New England, encouraged by their political leaders and outraged by the well-publicized British atrocities, such as the murder of Jane McCrae, soon began joining Gates’ camp in droves. The strength of the American army grew from 6,000 men under Schuyler to 18,000 under Gates. Fortified by these augmented forces, American morale rose, and the New York and New England militias began to work more harmoniously together under their new commander. Gates ordered his now greatly strengthened army to advance 28 miles up the Hudson to Bemis Heights, a ridge with a commanding view of the river near the town of Saratoga and an ideal place for defensive fortifications.

On September 19, 1777, near the farm of a Tory named John Freeman, the advancing British ran into an American scouting party, and a major battle ensued. Benedict Arnold, the impetuous but brilliant young commander whom Gates had placed in charge, sent an urgent request that Gates provide many more troops, possibly the whole army. Gates refused and ordered the Americans to retreat.
For three weeks, the two armies faced each other. Every day the Americans grew stronger and the British, facing dwindling supplies, grew weaker. A situation that had seemed hopeless for the Americans when Gates took command six weeks earlier was now promising. Arnold urged Gates to attack and press his advantage to keep the British army from escaping. Gates refused, correctly guessing that Burgoyne would not retreat, but instead risk all on a frontal attack that could not be won given the American fortifications. Gates relieved Arnold of his command.

On October 7, 1777, Burgoyne sent a probing force of 1,700 men to attack the American lines. It was easily repelled. Arnold, although relieved of his command, commanded a few regiments and led an attack that overran several key redoubts the Hessian commanders had set up, pushing the British back further. (For this action, he is sometimes today credited as the true winner of the battle, though historians disagree on this point.) Having failed to dislodge the Americans from Bemis Heights and facing a much larger and better supplied force, it was the British position that was now hopeless. Gates cut off their escape routes to the north, and a few days later, Burgoyne surrendered his entire army—almost one-quarter of the British troops in America—to Gates at Saratoga.

The impact throughout the Colonies was electric. The French, waiting for a signal that the American Revolution was viable, joined the war on the American side. British confidence that their professional soldiers could easily defeat American armies of citizen soldiers and militiamen was shattered. The British would ultimately abandon Philadelphia and refocus their strategy to concentrate on the Southern Colonies.

From Military Battles to Political Ones
At the time, Gates was considered the architect of the stunning American victory at Saratoga. Many in Congress in late 1777 and early 1778 were dissatisfied with Washington’s defeats, and since Gates was the victim of the most important battle, he was viewed as a logical replacement as commander in chief. However, Washington had a much stronger political base, and his allies were able to quash any movement to replace him. After his political effort failed, Gates resigned as head of the Board of War and was named commander of the Southern theater. After a much less distinguished performance at the Battle of Camden in which he was accused of abandoning his troops, his reputation was diminished.

After his first wife and only son died in the early 1780s, he married the wealthy widow Mary Vallance in 1786, and, later, they sold his Virginia estate. At the age of 62, he moved with his new wife to an estate near present-day 23rd Street in Manhattan, which was then a suburb outside the city, to live the quiet, comfortable life of a retired general. He had no active role in the government of the new nation he had helped to found, though he did work with veterans’ groups like the Society of the Cincinnati.

Gates’ fight for democratic government in America was not over, however. By 1800 in New York City, the Federalist party was committed to the re-election of John Adams and led locally by former Washington aide Alexander Hamilton. The Federalists were being bitterly attacked as too aristocratic by Revolutionary War veterans affiliated with the Tammany Society, which supported the election of Thomas Jefferson.

Aaron Burr, the key strategist for the Jeffersonian effort in New York, asked Gates, whose role at Saratoga 23 years earlier made him a symbol of the Revolution, to run as a candidate for state assembly on the Tammany ticket. Gates agreed, despite his personal friendship with Adams.

With Gates at its head, the Tammany ticket was successful, and New York state and the nation went for Jefferson. The Jeffersonian, or Democratic, party would control the nation’s politics into the 1840s, and the Tammany Society (later Tammany Hall) would be the major force in New York City’s politics for the next 150 years.

Despite Gates’ bravery at the Battle of Saratoga and his celebrity status in the elections of 1800, after his death in 1806, some historians obscured his achievements, giving field commanders the lion’s share of credit for victory at Saratoga. Eventually, the location of his grave was lost. Perhaps one day it will be found and marked. More important, maybe one day his proper place in the founding of American democracy will be recognized.

James Kaplan’s tour, sponsored by the Fraunces Tavern Museum, visits Trinity Church graveyard on July 4 as the sun rises over Manhattan. To learn more, e-mail jkaplan@hersfeld-rubin.com or call (212) 471–8546.
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